

Synchrotron Science Highlighted for Capitol Hill Policymakers

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In an effort to increase the visibility of the NSLS and that of the three other DOE light sources, the chair and vice-chair of the NSLS users' committee, along with their counterparts from the other light sources, met with officials on Capitol Hill on April 17 and 18.

"The overall aim of these visits was to raise the awareness of the synchrotrons and to lobby for increased budgets for the Office of Science, and for the physical sciences overall," says Simon Bare, chair of the users' committee of Brookhaven's National Synchrotron Light Source (NSLS), organizer and lead spokesperson of the delegation.

On the first day of the visit, the delegation met with senior members of the Senate and House Energy & Water Appropriations Committees, the House Science Committee's staff, and key members of the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Pat Fulton, Science Lobbyist for Stanford University and Jack Bagley, Battelle's Vice President for External Affairs, had set up all the necessary appointments for the six one-hour-long meetings.

On the second day, Bare and Leemor Joshua-Tor, vice-chair of NSLS users' committee, met with legislative assistants in the offices of Senators Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), and in the offices of Congressmen Gary Ackerman (D-NY), Felix Grucci (R-NY), and Steve Israel (D-NY).

The delegation members, representing the synchrotrons located at Brookhaven, Argonne, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories, as well as the

Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, explained the various scientific contributions of these facilities in basic and applied science, the economy, health, and security. The light source representatives also highlighted the critical role played by DOE in funding scientific research at the synchrotron sources, and asked for an increase in the FY03 budget for synchrotron science.



"We tried to demonstrate as much as we could to Capitol Hill policymakers that the light sources provide tangible benefits to industry," Bare says, "We particularly stressed the fact that these facilities have led to many scientific breakthroughs during the past decades and are now helping scientists to pursue forefront research, particularly in the life sciences."

In general, Capitol Hill officials recognized the scientific importance of the light sources, Bare says, but they also “strongly encouraged us to communicate our message to a much larger audience, including other members of Congress and stakeholders beyond Capitol Hill.”

In an effort to increase the FY03 budget beyond the President’s request for DOE’s Office of Science, Representatives Biggert (R-IL) and Tauscher (D-CA), and Senators Bingaman (D-NM) and Warner (R-VA) are now circulating letters to provide a broad bipartisan

support for science, and to encourage funding increases in the Office of Science. So far, at least a dozen Representatives and 35 Senators have signed these letters, Bare says.

“Our efforts to inform senior staff members about the importance of synchrotron facilities in many areas of science and technology are just bearing fruit,” Bare says. “We clearly need to increase our outreach efforts to broaden the policymakers’ commitments to synchrotron science in particular, and science in general.”

- Patrice Pages
